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Rural Class Differentiation in Nigeria - Theory and Practice

A Quantitative Approach in the Case of Nupeland

1. THE POPULIST POSITION

Social scientists concerned with West Africa in general, and with Nigeria in particular, often consider peasant societies as „class-less“. Recent surveys revealed a remarkable degree of social and economic inequality in the rural areas of Katsina-, Kano-, Zaria-, and Sokoto Provinces, or in the „cocoa-belt“ of Western Nigeria, to name just a few examples. Nevertheless these studies argue that this inequality does not manifest socioeconomic classes for a variety of reasons:

According to P. Hill, who represents the most outspoken position in this respect, class formation may be considered as a function of social mobility: The structures of inequality, though being stable in the short run, have to break down under the pressure of specific counter-acting levelling forces inherent in the peasantry; the period of stability is said to amount to about ten years but certainly not more than one generation, - last not least because of the „death as the great leveller“ (Hill, 1972: 161, 175-89; 1977: 156, 155-59; cf. Nadel, 1942: 133 for similar arguments in the case of Nupe villages). Other authors maintain that the peasantry is characterized by a common (class-) interest relative to more powerful strata of the national or even international system (cf. Saul, 1973: 104/05; Williams, 1977: 286). Peasants form the bottom of a class hierarchy which transfers a considerable proportion of the surpluses produced by the rural cultivators to dominant classes, whose power base (or at least its powerful support) is allocated outside the rural economy (cf. Post, 1972: 226, 241). Even if a group of such farmers has emerged during the past decades, - like in the „cocoa-belt“ -, employing farm labourers throughout the year and reinvesting considerable profits in farm-enterprises, Berry states that it would be inadequate to consider these well-to-do farmers as a distinctive class of „capitalists“: first, because one important factor, which constitutes such a class, is lacking, i. e., the development of the forces of production; and second, because farm labourers act strongly on the demand side, and are therefore in such a strong bargaining position that they usually participate in the gains of their masters, and do not suffer from economic exploitation (cf. Berry, 1975: 181/82, 134, 139-44, 117, 124, 203-05). Besides these points there are several other, sometimes related propositions, which all point to the same direction: e. g., capitalist farmers would have to rely on a class of resident landless labourers or at least migrant farm labourers, - a rural proletariat, however, has not yet arisen (cf. Norman, 1972: 38, 40; 1976: 51); land, the most important factor of production, is said to be still communally owned; the employment of hired labour as well as the production for the market is not a prerogative of capitalist farmers, and therefore such criteria do not fit for a demarcation of classes (cf. Beer, 1976: 5-8), etc.

Although the authors quoted above adhere to quite different methodological positions they nevertheless share one „populist“ point of view: class-differentiation *within* the Nigerian peasantry does not exist at present, and it is unlikely to develop in the foreseeable future (for a critique of the controversy between Populists and Marxists and for further literature on this debate, cf. Harrison, 1975).

The present study, however, wants to show by a critical examination of the theoretical foundations of some of the positions mentioned above, that the notion of a class-less peasantry in Nigeria might be based not so much on reality, but on an insufficient interpretation of the historic-materialistic class-concept. With the growing number of agro-economic surveys on Northern Nigeria the problem of socio-economic research shifts from the often lamented lack of data to the lack of adequate concepts to analyse the available information.

2. CRITIQUE OF WIDE-SPREAD CLASSIFICATION PATTERNS

The selection of criteria for the delimitation of classes will never be free of value judgments, but will always be done to serve - explicitly or implicitly - certain analytical and political purposes. The claim of political abstinence within the scope of the means-end dichotomy has proved to be mere ideology from the methodological standpoint of historic materialism, and in some cases the demarcation of classes even turned out to be instrumentalised policy *par excellence*. The following classification approach aims at providing future research with some of the tools, which are necessary to predict specific class-actions and the possibility of alliances between different classes. The point of departure of the following critique will be the historic-materialistic class definition, whose application is not restricted to social structures or values of capitalist societies of 19th century Europe. The appropriation of surplus-product is the sole foundation of this definition; that means, it may be used for the investigation of any social structure in which appropriation of surplus-product is existent, - be it feudalist-, capitalist-, or socialist relations of production. The actual form of the appropriation of surplus labour determines both the character of a certain class and the choice of adequate empirical indicators for the delimitation of classes.

If the subsequent sections deal with „farm labourers“, „capitalist farmers“, „poor peasants“, etc., then we are not concerned with isolated social individuals but with individuals as class members, i. e., with *persons only as far as they are „per sonifications of economic categories, holders of certain class relations and interests“* (Marx, K., Works (MEW), vol. 23: 16). Class-interest, then, is *not* a direct function of social mobility, e. g., of varying chances of peasant- or landlord-families to go through different classes during their life-time or in the sequence of generations. The question of „mobility“ is relevant for the solution of our problem only in so far, as a high average degree of mobility may build up considerable constraints on the way to the emergence of subjective class-consciousness, - and therewith it may hamper political actions of a class seriously (cf. Chapter 4.4); however, concerning the existence of the class „in itself“ and of an objective class-interest the „mobility-question“ is irrelevant.

Wage labourers and capitalists are a chief product of capital's realization process. Relations of exploitation between both of these classes do not result from an unfavourable labour-market forcing workers to sell their labour power *below* its value; but exactly the exchange of labour to its (reproduction-) value for its higher use-value forms the basic condition for the profit realization.

Although a high wage bill may tend to retard the accumulation of capital in the countryside and therefore, too, the dissolution-process of the peasantry, - any attempt, to consider the question of class-formation as a function of the market price of the commodity „labour“, will necessarily fail.

On the other hand one should not take the mere existence of a labour contract between landlord and peasant as the dawn of a new rural-capitalist society. Day-labourers and „free“ (i. e., free from any means of production) peasant-workers who exchanged their labour for money did (and do) exist also in pre-capitalist modes of production, - even in Europe (cf. Marx, „Grundrisse“, pp. 466-70; MEW 23: 762-66). Although the pay of these „free hands“ was certainly reduced in many cases to the absolute minimum, determined by the costs to maintain their life, and although their masters sold part of the workers product and thus created exchange value, the production took place mainly to create direct (or indirect) use-value (e. g., luxury goods) for the nobility. Labour in all these cases

was exchanged as use-value for money as part of the landlord's revenue, which merely mediated private consumption needs of the upper class. Hardly anyone would consider these conditions as capitalist relations of production: For only if the exchange of labour power as use-value for its exchange- (i. e. reproduction -) value becomes the content and *primary* aim of the exchange itself, - if the purchase of alien labour to sustain the production process gains pre-eminence over immediate consumption needs, and if extra-economic coercion does not govern anymore employment-relations, - then, and only then, „wage-labour“ in the meaning of political economy constitutes itself¹.

There exists another bias in West African analyses of rural inequality, — which often becomes articulated in a veiled form only —, to the effect that the demonstration of the existence of a landless proletariat in the countryside would be a precondition for a discussion on rural stratification in terms of (capitalist) class-formation (cf. Tiffen, 1976: 118; Hill, 1972: 175, 193; 1977: 175, 219). -But even in the stage of early capitalist development in Europe, from which this stereotype may have been derived, farm labourers who owned small parcels of land have been the rule rather than the exception, as the example of the *Instleute*, *Häusler* or *Büdner* in Germany might show, who were tied down to the soil to prevent them from migration and in order to reduce the wage-bill. In France the proportion of farm-labourers with landed property has been estimated to amount to about 75 % at the end of the 19th century. The most important source, however, which contributed to avoid seasonal labour-bottlenecks in agricultural production of Europe at that time was not a class of resident landless labourers, but migrant workers (cf. Collins, 1969; Kautsky, 1899, chap. VII; Lenin, Works, vol. 3: 172-75).

A fourth position which considers the social structure of African countries mainly from the angle of a postulated main-contradiction between imperialism and the Third World, similarly arrives at misleading results: This view, which is widespread, especially among scholars of the „dependency approach“, has the tendency to underestimate the present state of rural class differentiation or even to negate it *a priori*.

Its point of departure for the delimitation of classes is not the actual production-process in the countryside but the supposed class-interest of certain strata of the society. According to this point of view rural development in West African States is characterised by stagnant domestic food production and an export-crop economy, dominated by the requirements of the world market. This neo-colonial economy is said to preserve tribute paying modes of production; poor and rich farmers alike, in short „the peasantry as a class“, is exploited by the state, feudalist landlords, and/or the international bourgeoisie (cf. Amin 1973: 191-93; Williams, 1977: 286). Therefore it does not surprise that this approach frequently leads to a confusion of partial common interests of different classes, directed alike against imperialistic dominance, for the class-interest of an undifferentiated „peasantry“ in itself (cf. Shiviji, 1975: 12-14; Williams, 1976: 139-45).

The dominance of the economy of developing countries by imperialism and the urban bourgeoisie may cover the antagonism between local exploiters *vis a vis* poor and middle farmers in the villages, because all rural classes involved, share common interests in the struggle for national economic independence; it seems to be inadequate, however, to deduce the definition of classes only from a different weight of contradictions within a country or the world economy. Such a position would be idealistic:

It would deny the existence of classes within the peasantry just because the capitalist farmer has been exploited too, e. g., by the state or by the international bourgeoisie within the scope of an „unequal exchange“. Starting from the correct insight that rural relations of exploitation are not confined to the village level, this approach regards only „major“ class divisions as being relevant and treats the two- or threefold fleeced poor peasant as being equal to the latter's capitalist fellow-countryman.

The thesis of this study is neither that it will be possible to prove that all „peasant societies“ in West Africa will reveal more or less clear cut class-distinctions, nor to deny that certain structures, postulated by the „dependency-approach“, like the lack of a domestic market, insufficient profitability of agricultural production, stagnation of domestic food production or impoverishment of the peasantry without proletarianisation, might occur

1 In this light it may appear less difficult to integrate the so-called „exceptional cases“ into a consistent class model which are quoted time and again, i. e., the cases of employers of farm labourers like widows, old or disabled peasants, poor farmers who will not do manual work

owing to caste considerations or who hire labourers on exchange basis. All these persons have in common that they do not strive for profit, - that they struggle for survival, not as capitalists but as human beings.

even in certain regions of the Nigerian „Middle Belt". I hold, however, that it will not serve the better understanding of social laws of development, if the dependence-relationship mentioned above is claimed to be valid also for the still overwhelming majority of regions for which no or but insufficient analyses are available. By patient empirical investigation into rural social systems it might very well be possible to discover tendencies counteracting the dependence-mechanism; the case study of rural Nupeland given below is meant to be a first step in this direction.

3. CRITERIA FOR THE EMPIRICAL DELIMITATION OF CLASSES

Official agricultural statistics in Nigeria still take the seemingly equal distribution of land, which is supposed to be derived from the „communal land-tenure system", as index for the non-existence of economic stratification of the peasantry (cf. „Rural Economic Survey of Nigeria-Consolidated Report of the Land Tenure Enquiries, 1965-68", Federal Office of Statistics (F.O.S.), Lagos, 1972: 1, 2). But there is a growing awareness, even among non-marxist scientists, that cultivated area may be a misleading index of rural stratification (cf. Matlon, 1979:67). The unsatisfactory results of the investigation of agrarian structures by means of neo-classical or neo-populist theories recently caused two authors, engaged in the ongoing debate on the development of agrarian capitalism in India, to develop new concepts for the analysis of the differentiation of the peasantry on the empirical level (cf. Patnaik, 1976; Schoer, 1977). Patnaik's „labour-exploitation ratio" as well as Schoer's „resource position index" may be regarded as remarkable progress, as these indices are meant to go down to the grass-roots of the actual exploitative behaviour and the overall resource position of the peasants respectively. Both concepts, however, still have some shortcomings, which cannot be discussed here (for a detailed critique cf. Kohnert, 1980). The following construction of a „net-exploitation index" is intended to correct these shortcomings.

3.1 *The net-exploitation index*

If the models quoted above do not offer any better solution of the problems related with the classification of the peasantry than the „classics" they refer to, there is no good reason why one should not go back to the class concept developed by Lenin and Mao themselves². Then again the task remains to adopt this concept to the specific conditions of Nupeland and to transform it to a more formalised version.

The relation of income from exploitation to self-produced family income will be the base of the classification model suggested here. It is assumed that in developing regions like Nupeland the main source of income determines the class-position and -interest of a peasant in the overwhelming number of cases. Wealth and capital will be considered only so far as they contribute directly to the family income or to the extent they appear to be of absolute necessity for delimitating purposes.

Employment of wage labour is considered to be the main index of exploitative income: first, because it seems to be the most important and widespread source of expropriated labour among Nupe peasants; and second, because it is under the prevailing conditions the most direct and characteristic criterion of the rural capitalist development which is dawning at present in Nupeland. To prevent confusion between „wage-labour" in the sense of

2 Cf. Lenin, „New data on the laws of development of capitalism in agriculture", Works, vol. 22, and „Development of capitalism in Russia", Works, vol. 3; Mao Tse-tung, „How to differentiate classes in the village", Col. Works, vol. 1; „The present situation and our tasks", vol. 4; „Request for opinions on the tac-

tics for dealing with rich peasants", vol 5:24/25; cf. also the official „explanations" of the Chinese Council of People's Commissars „concerning the differentiation of class status in the countryside", App. to „The Agrarian Reform Law of the People's Republic of China", Peking, 1950.

political economy as social relationship, and mere paid labour (see above), it will be necessary to introduce additional conditions for the definition of a „capitalist“ peasant household: As *capitalist* shall be considered a farmer who

- (a) employs hired labour primarily to make profit (to expropriate surplus-value) and not just to secure his own reproduction, i. e., the survival of himself and his family, and
- (b) reinvests the expropriated surplus-value at least to that extent in his farm, that the value of his productive consumption (raw-material, fertilizer, seed, expenditure on tractor hiring service (T.H.U.), etc.) p.a. is significantly above the level of productive consumption of an average peasant³.

As *landlords* shall be defined all families which mainly live on appropriated surplus-product produced by other means than wage labour, without suffering from want of any means of existence. *Poor peasants* and *farm labourers* shall be considered as those classes which do not dispose over sufficient resources to meet the requirements of their own reproduction, or have to earn most of their income by working as hired farm labourers. *Middle peasant families*, on the other hand, earn their living mainly by employing their own labour and their own resources.

Apparently it would be inappropriate to define only such economic units as farm-households, which earn the major part of their income in agriculture. Because under that precondition even landlords or rich peasants might be excluded from the investigation, if their non-farm income exceeds their farm income. However, if everybody who earns an income from agriculture which is worth mentioning (e. g., more than half of the „necessary product“) is to be counted as peasant, it will be advisable, - at least concerning middle- and rich peasants -, to separate between their class-position in agriculture and their possible class-position in other sectors of the economy. Two arguments support this separation:

First, as mentioned above, the class definition should try to reflect not just the present situation but also facilitate the analysis of the direction of the dissolution-process of the peasantry. One would, however, tend to overestimate the development-potential of (capitalist) agriculture, if even the owner of a rice-mill or any businessman with farm income would be classified as rural capitalist only because his overall position in the economy is a capitalist one. Second, an industrial capitalist or a self-employed (teacher, crafts-man, etc.) with agricultural secondary income may occupy a completely different political position within and outside the agricultural sector⁴. Disregarding the total resource position of a farmer, on the other hand, may also lead to an underestimation of his future development-potential; for example, if the profitability of agricultural production should increase relatively to other spheres of investment, this could cause an inflow of merchant capital into agricultural enterprises; - it is hold, however, that the advantages of the method mentioned above do outweigh this disadvantage.

For the purpose of class-delimitation the following definitions are given⁵:

3 The problem, whether „accumulation“ is to be considered as a necessary condition for the definition of capitalist relations of production has been discussed to some length in the debate on the development of rural capitalism in India, cf. Chattopadhyay, 1972; Patnaik, 1976. A peasant may appropriate under certain conditions surplus-value from hired labour on a large scale and nevertheless may not invest it on his farm but in other - more profitable - spheres of investment like trading, construction or transport. Although, of course, such a farmer would be a capitalist too, it is thought to be inappropriate to include him in the class of rich peasants, since this class is meant to provide insight not just into the *status quo*, but also into the fu-

ture of capitalist development. Concerning the Nupe, however, this delimitation problem is of secondary importance, as in over 90 % of the rich peasant households, - determined without the accumulation criterion -, at least parts of the profit flow back into agriculture; this is already sufficient to lift the value of the means of production employed by that households significantly above the average.

4 Cf. Mao, Col. Works, vol. 5: 213, 224; Su Hsing, 1968. 2: 18-20; Ho Tsai, 1957.

5 All definitions are related to the peasant-family, - i. e., „those people eating from the same pot“, according to the definition adopted by the F.O.S., Lagos-, and to the period of one year.

The *necessary product* be the net-income which is necessary for the reproduction of family labour; of course this value depends on the different regional socio-economic conditions. In Nupeland the average daily wage of a farm labourer, multiplied by the number of working days p. a., of the standardized labour power of a peasant family, is considered to be a reasonable approximation of the necessary product. As the traditional *efakô* labour system of the extended family in Nupeland is presently subjected to a rapid dissolution, there are considerable variations - depending on the number of family members - concerning the value of the necessary product.

The family income consists out of agricultural and non-agricultural income. The *agricultural let-income* be the gross value of production of a farm-household less the cost of production (family labour does not count as cost-factor here) plus secondary income from rent. The *net-exploitation index* be the value of the surplus-product produced by non-family labour in agriculture and appropriated by the family less the total value of the surplus-product produced by family labour for others.

The most convenient and direct way, to estimate the relation of appropriated surplus-product and income of a farmer from his own labour, is considered to be the comparison of the actual labour input. Therefore the delimitation will be made in labour-day equivalents, corresponding to the Chinese Model or Patnaik's „outside labour index" (cf. „Agrarian Reform Law", Peking, 1959: 17-50; Patnaik, 1976: A 84).

If a farmer receives exploitation-income from other sources than wage labour, e. g., rent or usurious interest (S), there is the possibility to convert this surplus product in labour-day equivalents (d) as well, provided that there exist reasonable estimates on the average rate of surplus (r) and the wage per day (w) ($d = S/[r \times w]$). Of course such estimates provide only a very rough idea of the actual quantity of exploited labour. The net-exploitation index (X), - expressed in labour-day equivalents -, is equal to the number of non-family labour days employed in agriculture (d), minus the number of labour days (farm and non-farm) worked for other people (t); (d-t) may be subdivided into net wage labour days, net labour days appropriated (given away) by rent, usury, etc., analogous to Patnaik's „outside-labour index" (cf. Patnaik, 1976: A 84). Its aim is to facilitate the valuation of the proportion of exploitation-income in the farm profit, and it is a decisive and necessary but not sufficient criterion of delimitation in the class model suggested here.

The *farm profit* be the surplus-product produced by both self-employed family labour and non-family labour; it is equal to the agricultural net income less the cost of family labour (valued at current wage-rates) employed on the own farm.

The deviation of labour productivity and -intensity between family- and non-family labour (as well as between different economic units) may gain considerable importance even within one village. Because of the lack of sufficiently accurate data the following analysis nevertheless has to assume that the variance will be in limits which allow — for our classification purpose - to disregard these variations altogether. Since, however, the labour productivity and therefore (c. p.) also the rate of surplus-value is likely to be higher in rich farmers' households than in poor farmers' households — because of different means and methods of production employed (cf. Hill, 1972: 108, 163; Matlon 1979: 78-82) -, this assumption leads to an underestimation of the dissolution process of the peasantry rather than to an overestimation.

The preceding assumptions form the basis of the following model of classes in a Nupe village:

- *Farm labourers*: At least half of the total net income is derived from work as hired farm labourer.
- *Poor peasant*: The total net income is smaller than the necessary product. The main source of income is agriculture.
- *Middle peasant*: (1) The net income is higher than or equal to the necessary product, and (2) less than half of the net income is derived from rural wage labour, and (3.0) the agricultural net income is smaller than the necessary product, or (3.1) less than half of the farm profit consists of net-exploitation income, i. e., the net-exploitation index is smaller than half the sum of non-family and self-employed family labour on the own farm, or (3.2) the value of the productive consumption on the farm is below or equal to the average level of all peasant households.
- *Rich peasant*: (or capitalist farmer) (1) The agricultural net income is higher or equal to the necessary product, and

- (2) at least half of the farm profit consists of net-exploitation income, i. e., the net-exploitation index is higher than or equal to half the sum of non-family labour and self-employed labour on the own farm, *and*
 - (3) rural wage labour forms at least half of the exploited non-family labour, *and*
 - (4) the value of the productive consumption on the own farm is higher than the average value in all peasant households.
- *Landlord*: (1) *and* (2) like „rich peasant“, *and*
- (3) rural wage labour forms less than half of the exploited non-family labour.

In conclusion these definitions yield the following results: Farm labourers are always subject to net exploitation; poor- and middle peasants usually get net exploited but may appropriate surplus product of other peasants too, - the latter, however, does not surpass the narrow limits set by the necessary product or the family labour power; rich peasants and landlords are always net exploiters, - although they, as well as the other classes, may get exploited by forces outside the agricultural sector of the economy.

3.2 On the operationality of the net-exploitation index

The model of class demarcation suggested here may appear somewhat unwieldy by separating agricultural- and non-agricultural income and by transforming income into labour days. The operationality, however, does not necessarily suffer from this procedure. Besides the advantages of the estimation of income-relations on the basis of labour-day equivalents mentioned above, one might consider that additional evaluations on the surplus produced outside agriculture by the peasants concerned would be required, in order to be able to give up the separation between agricultural- and non-agricultural income. This would increase the cost of investigation considerably. In addition it would prevent secondary analyses of sample surveys like the surveys published by the Institute of Agricultural Research (I.A.R.), Samaru, or other institutes in Nigeria, because, as a rule, data on 'secondary income' are not disaggregated sufficiently in these studies.

The demands concerning the precision of the required data are not as stringent as it may appear at first sight, because it is asked mainly for relations and less for exact absolute figures; in surveying rich peasants or landlords, for example, a glance at the resource position and the knowledge of the local conditions may suffice in many cases, to tell whether the net farm-income of the farmer will exceed the necessary product or not; this again will facilitate checks on the farmers' statements considerably.

The most difficult task will be the evaluation of income from exploitation: rent, tribute, and interest are known as very sensitive data; there does exist a variety of religious, social or economic reasons on both sides, which may cause the respondents to conceal actual dependence-relationships (cf. Chap. 4). Answers on this issue can hardly be checked in the individual case, and one has to be content with very rough estimates. During the survey of Nupe villages in 1976 even the investigation in the employment of hired labour proved to be difficult, because poverty, which presses a poor farmer to work for money for his well-to-do neighbour, is considered to be a shame; thus it happened that peasants, who were known in the village to work many days p. a. as *kwadago* labourers (rural wage-labourers), bluntly denied any such occupation when questioned in personal interviews; on the other hand middle- and especially rich peasants sometimes claimed, contrary to evidence, to do certain tasks on their field by themselves, perhaps because they wanted to boast of being a strong and achievement-oriented farmer, or because they wanted to understate their expenditures on hired labour, in order to underline their need for credit from the Farm Center, which provided money on favourable conditions to selected farmers. Both attitudes, however, are likely to result in an underestimation of the spread of hired labour and c. p. of rural-capitalist development; besides detailed information on the employment of family- and non-family labour is required in the class-models quoted above as well, and therefore it cannot be considered as a special disadvantage of the suggested classification-scheme.

4. CLASSES IN RURAL NUPELAND

Nupeland or the Bida Emirate forms part of the Niger State north of the Niger river valley between Jebba and Baro. It is situated in the „Middle Belt" or the guinea savannah of Northern Nigeria. The vast swamps of the Niger as well as of the Kaduna and Gbako, two other major rivers, which divide Nupeland from north to south, are among the hottest but at the same time most humid regions of Nigeria (cf. Nadel, 1942: 3). The Emirate has some 500 000 inhabitants and the population density is relatively low with about 40 p/km² on the average.

The natural resources and modes of production in Nupeland are similar in many respects to the conditions in the Emirates further to the north, and the political development in the past has formed strong links between the Fulani/Nupe rulers in Bida and their traditional overlords in Gwandu or Sokoto as well. The Nupe-*jihadat* at the beginning of the 19th century, backed by troops from Gwandu, brought about far-reaching changes concerning both the economic and political system of the Nupe (cf. Nadel, 1942; Mason, 1970). The development of a slave- und client economy and continuous slave raids by the Fulani kings of Bida and their fiefholders during the latter half of the 19th century resulted in a remarkable population-transfer from the Western- and Southern parts of the Nupe-Empire to the Bida region. The formation of so called „slave villages", *tungazi*, was one of several other factors which tended to break through the regional isolation of the subsistence economy of petty producers; in conjunction with the appropriation of the surplus product of the peasantry by the ruling class in Bida it accelerated economic growth and trade, - especially long-distance trade in slaves, arms, and horses as well as textiles, cola-nuts, palm-oil, and shea-butter, - the major agricultural exports during this century (cf. Mason, 1973).

When the troops of the „Royal Niger Company" conquered Bida during a „punitive expedition" in 1897 because of growing disturbances of the Company's trade by the Nupe raids, the Emirate fell into rapid disintegration. The British resident in Bida reported, that in 1902 all villages to the west of the river Kaduna had thrown off their yoke of serfdom and did acknowledge neither the authority of the Emir nor of the colonial power:

„Farms were being deserted by the slaves and such was the state of unrest, that cultivation had almost ceased. The Fulani ruling classes were rapidly becoming desperate of the state of the country. . .“ National Archives, Kaduna (NAK), file: BIDANA, B 655, p. 3).

A further dissolution of the power of the traditional landlord class was prevented by the British, who not only reinstated the *Etsu* Nupe (the Emir) but even strengthened his authority in many respects (cf. Kohnert, 1980).

4.1 The land-tenure system

Among the Nupe there exists a long established distinction between the fertile but dry uplands (*lad*) to the west of the Kaduna River (Trans-Kaduna), and the vast stretches of valuable marsh-land (*bata* or *fadama*) situated to the east of the Kaduna (Cis-Kaduna). Apart from other factors, like the distance from the capital, different degrees of access to the market and to sources of secondary income, these variations in the use-value of land have contributed to the development of different land-tenure systems in the western and eastern parts of Nupeland.

In Trans-Kaduna the cultivation density is very low, with an estimated average of 20 % - even in the surroundings of most of the villages it probably does not exceed 60 %. The low population pressure allows for long fallow periods of up to 15 years, - if the „bush land" then will be taken up again at all. The cultivation density in Cis-Kaduna of 50-100 % by far surpasses that of Trans-Kaduna, although even here there are regions, like in the Bida, Wuya, Kuchi triangle, with densities of 0-10 %. Most of the *fadama* fields are cultivated permanently, fallow periods seldom exceed three years.

At the time of the greatest territorial expansion and power concentration of the Bida Emirate (1857-1901) the three rival royal houses of Bida and their fiefholders founded about 1380 *tungazi* east of the Kaduna, in the surroundings of Bida, Lemu, Jima, etc. The

slaves and clients in these villages had not just to supply their absentee landlords with food and tribute in kind, but had to produce for the market, too; thus they could get the cowries which were demanded by their masters as additional monetary tribute, which enabled the nobility of Bida to trade in arms, horses, etc., on an even larger scale, and to enhance the effectiveness of their slave-raiding troops (cf. Mason, 1973: 457-66).

Starting under the reign of *Etsu* Masaba (1859-73), nicknamed as „Father of Distributing“ by the Nupe peasants, the ruling class tailored the land-tenure system to meet the requirements of the economic and political organisation of the Nupe state. The distribution of fiefs according to its value and geographical position was one of the most important means by which the Fulani-dynasty could secure the loyalty of its followers as well as the balance of power between fiefholders and the royal families on the one hand, and the competing royal houses on the other hand (cf. Nadel, 1942: 117/18). Although this fief-system underwent some transformations and restrictions in consequence of the abolition of the slave trade (since 1897), the suppression of pawning of human pledges (1933/34), and the official ban of tribute payments by the British (1906 and 1946), it nevertheless remained intact to an astonishing degree⁶.

Formally the legal fiction of „communal landownership“ and the prohibition to sell land, as included already in the colonial land laws, is still valid today; but it actually amounts merely to the ultimate sovereignty of the *Etsu* Nupe and his council in all questions concerning land transactions in the Bida Emirate.

In reality two overlapping land-tenure systems exist in Nupeland, which hardly can be compared with the communal tenure concept, which grants the tilling peasant only usufructuary rights, whereas the land is held in trust and apportioned by the village chief. The overwhelming number of farms in Trans-Kaduna as well as most village land in Cis-Kaduna has been owned by individual families for generations; these families can rent, pledge or give away their land at will, although there are still some restrictions concerning land-transactions with strangers. The relatively low use-value of land west of the Kaduna and the growing distance from the capital, which made the political and military control of slave-villages more difficult, are probably the main reasons why in Trans-Kaduna the fief-system could gain a footing only in few fertile enclaves like the cola-plantations of Labozhi or the oil-palm region of Yeti. Out of a total of 1591 *tungazi* founded in Nupeland during the 19th century just 13 % were situated in Trans-Kaduna districts (cf. Mason, 1973: 459). As far as tribute payment is demanded today also in the uplands of the Mokwa- or Kutigi districts, it is rather a symbolic sign of the recognition of the peasant's loyalty *vis a vis* his former fiefholder than rent in the economic meaning: the *Nákorgi* for example, a high ranking titel-holder of the Fulani-dynasty in Bida, who „owns“ among others four hamlets to the east and south of Dabba, does receive at present not more than 1-2 bags of guinea corn as *zakka* (tribute) per village annually according to his own information.

Since the advent of colonial rule the British Residents of the Niger Province undertook several futile attempts to destroy the fiefholder-system in Nupeland and to suppress *zakka* payments, which the peasants had to pay besides the regular tax; the reasons behind this policy were threefold: first, tribute obligations were suspected to constitute a heavy drain on the potential revenue of the Bida Treasury, as had been shown by the example of the ruthless exploitation of the peasantry in the course of the so-called „anti-witchcraft-movements“ (1910-20), organised by the *ndako gboyá* in co-operation with the *Etsu*, which left hardly any tax for the British and became so intolerable that the Resident had to forbid all performances of the cult^{6a}. Second, tribute formed an additional

6 For a more detailed account of the development of the Nupe land-tenure system, see: Kohnert 1980.

6a cf. Nadel, 1942: 126/27 and literature quoted there; on the transformation of the

ndako gboyá from a weapon of the peasantry against illegitimate power to an official cult in the hands of the *Etsu*, meant to suppress the peasants cf. Kohnert, 1980.

source of income for the landlords which perpetuated their far-reaching autonomy in opposition to the colonial administration. Third, the British were afraid, that the peasants might be driven into open rebellion by over-taxation through the ruling class in Bida: „... . the *Etsu* should realize that, when they (the peasants, D.K.) become fully alive to their significance they are liable to take matters into their own hands.“ (Secretary Northern Provinces to Resident, Niger Province, 4 Dec., 1945, NAK, BIDANA, B 1332).

Although Lugard boasted already in 1906, with regard to Nupe Division, that „The old fief-holders have been abolished; they numbered 76 . . .“ (Lugard, F. D., 1907: 43), he apparently was wrong, as in 1944 the British Administration had to admit officially that the old fief-system was still very much alive:

„It touches the personal interest of practically every senior member of the Bida Native Administration . . . In my opinion official recognition of the system by which large tracts of land are alienated from the peasantry would be as unconscionable as were the Enclosure Acts of the late 18th century in England . . .“ (Senior District Officer (D.O.), Bida to Resident, Niger Province, 9 Aug., 1944, NAK, *ibid.*).

According to a list compiled by the *Etsu* Nupe in 1945 at least 145 landlords existed in Bida, who „owned“ up to 20 villages each, all told 437 in Bida Emirate, from which they received 1-250 bundles of guinea-corn p. a.⁷. Although the British forced the *Etsu* in 1946 to tour his districts and to announce heavy sentences for the payment (!) or demand of *zakka*, there is no reason to suppose any substantial changes concerning the scale of the fief-system up to now. The fight of the colonial power against the feudal relicts in Northern Nigeria turned out to be half-hearted to say the best, since attacks on the economic base of the landlords would have changed the co-operative attitude of the ruling class, - on which the whole system of „indirect rule“ depended -, into open hostility. So it does not surprise that the publication of Adeniyi's findings that 59 % of the farmers still paid *zakka* for more than 60 % of their farmland in the Jima/Doko - and Katcha Districts (Cis-Kaduna) in 1969 (Adeniyi, 1972: 56), apparently made no impression at all, neither on the State Government in Sokoto nor on the landlord class in Bida.

The opposition of the colonial administration against the relicts of the feudal economy may, however, have contributed, - beside other factors like the low cultivation density -, to the fact that in Nupeland up to now no share-crop arrangements with a strict relationship between economic yield and rent did emerge, - apart from a few enclaves in the *fadama* areas. Loyalty and respect for the landlord are still necessary conditions for the continuation of the tenancy, and *zakka* had been paid by villages even for uncultivated land (cf. Nadel, 1942: 194-46, Native Authority (N.A.) office, Bida to S.D.O., 5 Aug. 1944, NAK, *ibid.*). If tenant and landlord are from the same social stratum or if they are on good terms, small presents suffice to get the right for cultivation of the land. Non-payment, however, is hold to be a sign of open confrontation. A landlord will register even the receipt of small gifts with great zeal, as in land disputes the N.A. Court in Bida will give the land to the tiller, if the latter should be able to prove that the landlord or his heirs have allowed the tribute to lapse for more than ten years without calling in the lease (pers. inf., *Makun* Nupe). Under these conditions reliable data on *zakka* payments are difficult to collect: the peasants are keen to give the impression that their tribute payments are mere presents or religious obligations, in order to understate the real value of the tribute, or to deny any tenancy-relationship; the landlords, on the other hand, tend to overstate their demands as well as the payments received.

A field survey conducted by the author in 1976 yielded the following approximate values for *zakka* payments in Cis-Kaduna: First, an initial payment of Naira (N) 1-6 per *lati* (upland farm) and N 10 per *fadama* farm; second, an annual rent in kind of 1-3

7 Cf. *Etsu* Nupe to D.O., Bida, 17 Dec., 1945, NAK, *ibid.*; both the quantity and the value of the tribute and the number of villages had

been understated for obvious reasons, as can be proved in some cases even today.

bundles guinea-corn or 2—12 *dana* rice respectively⁸. According to *Makaman Bida*, the proportion of *zakka* in family farm-income does not exceed as a rule of thumb 5% nowadays; this is in accordance with more detailed accounts which cannot be given here. The available data indicate that, with the exception of the enclaves mentioned above, the actual average value of *zakka* has been declining for the past 30 years; it probably does not correspond any more to the tithe traditionally demanded by the Koran.

Pledge of land is common today at least in the marsh-lands of Cis-Kaduna, - a peasant in need of money will receive about N 15 and N 25 for one acre *lati* and *fadama* respectively. The sale of land is still illegal, although it is supposed to take place, covered by unlimited lease-contracts. Just two out of 210 peasants interviewed openly confessed the sale of farm plots. Most farmers, however, know very well what they would pay for a piece of land if they could buy it; in the Jima area, for example, on the average N 50 for about one acre upland and two to three times as much for one acre *fadama*. The guidelines of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Local Government (L.G.) - Minna for compensation payments for land required by the state, may give some hints for the rocketing value of agricultural land in the past decade: the upper limit of compensation payments for a one acre rice farm was £ 20 in 1966, £ 100 in 1972, and £ 200 (or N 400) in 1976 (files on Land Compensation, Farm Center, Bida).

Unfortunately the subsequent quantitative analysis of the social structure of Nupe villages has to exclude the absentee landlords although these may have a decisive influence on the future agricultural development of Nupeland; this is considered to be a great disadvantage, but seems to be inevitable for the reasons given below:

(a) In none of the four villages surveyed there were resident landlords, who cultivated farms by their own, or hired labour, apart from Lemu, where the District Head farmed some few acres of guinea-corn and rice for self-consumption. Landlords therefore appear only indirectly in the social structure of the villages concerned by the economic implications of their traditional landownership claims.

(b) Actual tribute obligations of the peasants are either not commensurable because parts of these obligations are paid in social values and not in money or grain, or data deficiency - due to the sensitivity of this issue - may allow an overall assessment but no detailed delimitation of the class position according to the model suggested here. In Jima and Lemu, for example, only 24 % and 15 % of peasants interviewed admitted to pay annual tribute for land farmed by themselves; the Village Head of Jima, however, intimated to the author that, beside about 200 acres village land, all land around Jima would be claimed by one or another landlord, and that more than half of the farms in the Jima region were owned by a high ranking fiefholder, titled *Tswankuku*, from the Umaru-Majigi house, - *Cekpabe* being a second big landlord. Other reliable peasants expressed the view that „everybody“ in the village would have to pay *zakka* to *Tswankuku*, usually two *dana* rice or two bundles of guinea-corn, paid to a middleman, who comes at the beginning of the dry season to collect the tribute. The D. H., himself a member of the reigning Majigi-house, informed the author that *Tsoida*, related to the „greedy Masaba-family“, would own one third of the land around Jima, whereas *Tswankuku* would own just a quarter, etc..

(c) The income of a big absentee landlord from rent may be up to five or eight times as high as the average net income of an ordinary peasant: *Tswankuku* again, according to his own statement, „owns“ about 12 km² of valuable marshland to the south of Jima, i. e., probably twice as much as any other fiefholder in this area. About 400 peasants from five villages of the Jima/Doko district pay 1-5 *dana* rice as tribute to him. If one takes into account that another seven villages in Cis-Kaduna pay allegiance to the *Tswankuku* family, then the latter probably derives the imposing gross-income of N 2000-3000 p. a. from rent alone (it may be that part of the rent has to be given to the overlord of the family, the *Étsu Nupe*). The appropriation of surplus product in the form of rent and in such dimensions, however, is restricted to a relatively small group of fiefholders. Spread over the mass of tribute paying peasants the burden per farming unit usually does not exceed substantially the amount of the community tax of N 4 for every male adult family member p. a.. Although this may still be a heavy burden for the poor farmer, the *present* level of the rent will certainly not hamper future rural-capitalist development; in view of annual farm-expenditures of about N 350, tribute payments

8 The market-price of one bundle guinea-corn was N 1.3 in 1976, according to size and quality, and of one *dana* rice up to N 1.50.

Tribute is a function of the social relationship and the size and value of the farm.

would hardly affect the accumulation of a rich peasant. The uncertainty, whether it will be possible to reap the fruits of investments, if the landlords should tend to develop a more „commercial“ attitude concerning their tenancy arrangements, is more likely to affect the accumulation-propensity of a capitalist farmer.

(d) The economic significance of the landlord class for the future development of the dissolution-process of the peasantry is probably to be seen not so much in the actual semi-feudal exploitation, the scope of which is relatively modest, compared with other developing countries in Asia or Latin America, - but in the claim of ownership over vast stretches of most valuable land in the Emirate. In view of the present distribution of power these claims may be coined into profit or higher rents without resistance worth mentioning, if these regions should yield considerably higher incomes in the future (see below). But there seems to exist no practicable way to integrate this potential resource position of the landlords into a quantitative analysis of class-relations.

Generally speaking, an analysis of classes in a village should not neglect entirely regional, or even international relationships of exploitation, like in the case of the export oriented cocoa-farmers of Western Nigeria. Nevertheless this analysis will disregard these relationships for the following reasons:

First, production of the Nupe peasants is directed almost entirely towards the internal market, agricultural imports are of minor influence on supply and demand in Nupeland. Second, the most important agricultural products of the Nupe, i. e. rice and guinea-corn, are not traded by the „Marketing Boards“, and therefore are not subject to indirect taxation by the State. Third, the ruling class in the Bida Emirate consists of a coalition of landlords, headed by the Fulani-dynasty in Bida, and a stratum of bureaucrats and merchants, the emerging national bourgeoisie in Bida, which is closely interwoven with the landlords (cf. Kohnert, 1978).

The influence of the urban bourgeoisie on rural relationships of exploitation, however, seems to be insignificant. Up to now members of this stratum who invest in land consider this investment above all as security and social insurance in bad times; just six of these families in Bida own a farm of more than 50 acres (but the largest private farm in the whole Nupeland, 300 acres *lati* and *fadama*, belongs to a rich constructor in Bida). Trade in most agricultural products is still decentralized, and significant monopolistic profits are unlikely. Exploitation by usury is said to be negligible in Nupeland (cf. Nadel, 1942: 371-74).

4.2 The dissolution-process of the peasantry in four Nupe villages

The class-analysis given below is based on data collected during a field survey of 210 farmers in four Nupe villages from March 1976 to Nov. 1976. The most important source of information were detailed questionnaire-interviews on the social and economic position of the peasants, supplemented by both field visits together with the farmers in the case of doubtful declarations, e. g. concerning farm size or products cultivated and harvested, and informal interviews with village- and district authorities.

The quality of information therefore depended largely on the co-operation and the memory of the peasants interviewed; the data are not claimed to be of absolute precision, and in most cases represent relations or approximate values only; sensitive data like information on tribute and income are likely to be underestimated despite several cross-checks applied. A separate study on the advantages and disadvantages of the „limited visit technique“ (cf. Collison, 1972: 116–19, 225–47, 306–319) in general, and on the methodology applied in this survey in particular is underway.

The four villages surveyed are characterized by different stages of socio-economic development; the relatively heavier weight on the backward villages in the total sample will provide for a cautious valuation of the dissolution-process of the Nupe peasantry. Although the villages selected are not representative for the study area in the statistical sense, there is no indication that they are in any way unique, compared with other villages in the same location; a detailed description of the selection criteria and the different natural- and socio-economic conditions of the villages will be given in another context.

Applied on these data, the classification model suggested above results in the outline of class relations shown in Tab. 1 and 2; however, an interpretation of the results should never forget the lack of information concerning the landlord class.

Tab. 1: Resource position of different classes in four Nupe villages, 1975/76
(average values per farm-household p. a., and relative frequency per class).

resource position \ class	rich peasant		middle peasant		poor peasant/ farm labourer		total	
	%		%		%		%	
households per class	15	7	91	43	104	50	210	100
No. of residents	9.7 ^b		7.5		7.6		7.7	
age of household head (years)	44.7		41.0 ^a		45.0		43.2	
necessary product ¹ (in N)	256	6	253	39	313	55	283	100
family-labour days ²	176	6	197 ^a	38	254	56	224	100
non-family-labour days	264 ^a	30	72 ^a	49	29	22	64	100
net-exploitation index ¹	253 ^a	35	52 ^a	44	22	21	52	100
expenditure on non-family labour (in N)	311 ^a	27	93 ^a	49	39	24	82	100
expenditure on means of production (in N) ³	49 ^a	20	20 ^a	49	11	31	18	100
acreage upland	12.5	12	8.0	45	6.6	43	7.6	100
cultivated: <i>fadama</i>	5.2 ^b	29	2.5 ^a	60	0.7	19	1.8	100
land value ⁴	28 ^b	16	15 ^a	50	9	34	13	100
households owning <i>fadama</i> fields (in %)	93		69		28		50	
agricultural net income (in N) ¹	626 ^b	15	470 ^a	66	119	19	312	100
secondary income (in N) ⁵	558	41	108 ^a	48	22	11	98	100
disposable income (in N) ⁷	1142 ^b	21	573 ^a	63	142	16	410	100
income from rent (in N) ⁶	(2.4)		(0.8)		(0.0)			
subsistence index ⁸	53		55 ^b		61		58	
secondary income as % of disposable income	29.9 ^b		18.5		16.1		18.1	
household heads with secondary-school education (in %)	13		1.1		0.0		1.4	

1 See text for definition.

2 Rough standardized estimates: only the number of family members working on the farm, their sex and age as well as their major tasks during the past agricultural year were asked for; this information was standardized to male adult labour equivalents and multiplied by 138.6, i. e., the estimated average number of days per male adult, worked on the family farm p. a. (cf. Norman, 1972: 23; Baldwin, 1957: 133 and Kohnert, 1980 for a more detailed description).

3 Self-produced means of production, like storage facilities, etc., excluded.

4 In „upland-units“: 1 acre *fadama* = 3 acres upland.

5 Secondary income in kind excluded.

6 Declared rent only, see text.

7 Agricultural and non-agricultural income; income of wives and income from livestock excluded.

8 Proportion of income in kind in gross household income (in %).

t - test, separate variance estimate, SPSS-10, 1977 (one-tail prob.);

a Deviation opposite to next lower class significant on 1 % level;

b Deviation opposite to next lower class significant on 5 % level.

Source: Author's Survey, 1976.

Tab. 2: *Classes in four Nupe villages, 1975/76 (no. of cases and relative frequency of households per class)*

class \ village	upland				fadama				average	
	Trans-Kaduna		Cis-Kaduna		Cis-Kaduna					
	Dabba	%	Lemu	%	Jima	%	Kuchi ³	%		
landlords ¹	-	-	n. a.		n. a.		n. a.		n. a.	
rich peasants	1	1	4	8	8	16	2	10	15	7
middle peasants	27	31	23	44	25	50	16	80	91	43
poor peasants	59	67	23	44	17	34	1	5	100	48
farm labourers ²	1	1	2	4	-	-	1	5	4	2
total	88	100	52	100	50	100	20	100	210	100

1 Quantitative information on landlords not available.

2 Resident labourers only, the actual number of farm labourers by far exceeds these values, see text.

3 The selection of respondents in Kuchi is not representative of the total population, as only such farmers were selected who worked at least 10 days as farm labourers in 1975/76.

Source: Author's survey, 1976.

Considerable inequalities between under- and over-privileged classes are obvious (Tab. 1). Rich peasants, who constitute just 7 % of the households in the total sample, have at their disposal more than 30 % of non-family labour employed (i. e. mainly hired labour, but also certain forms of paid communal labour, *egbe*, *dzoro*), - about 21 % and 12 % of the cultivated marsh- and upland respectively, - more than 15 % of the net production-value, - more than 21 % of the disposable income of all sample units, etc. The high share of non-agricultural income in the case of rich farmers is the result of the exceptionally high salaries of two members of this class. Generally, capitalist farms in Nupe-land are *not* merely the waste product of surplus-money of urban based merchants or L. A. officers. Nearly half of the rich peasants dispose of a secondary income of less than N 100p. a. and therefore have to finance their farm-business overwhelmingly from its own profits. There is no statistically significant correlation between the level of secondary incomes and the extent of non-family labour employment.

Nevertheless the development of rural capitalism among the Nupe apparently is still in its infancy: Even the majority of rich-peasant households depends to a considerable degree on family labour, although their family labour input is far below the family labour input of poor peasant families, despite the larger farms - and family size of rich farmers. The value of the means of production employed by rich peasants, i. e., both the land value and the expenditures on fertilizer, seed, insecticides, Tractor Hiring Service, etc., is significantly higher than in all other classes, but in absolute terms it is still relatively low. The low organic composition of capital of rich peasant farms may be taken as another sign of the early stage of rural capitalist development. The dissolution process of the peasantry became visible probably only 10 to 20 years ago. It may have been accelerated by the enormous growth of the production for the domestic market in the 1950's, especially concerning rice cultivation, which is still remembered by the peasants. The number of local rice mills in Bida Division, which may be taken as growth-indicator, soared from one mill in 1955 to 99 in 1976 (Files, Health Dept., Gbako L. G., Bida). The development of commodity production has been promoted among others by three factors (for a detailed account, cf. Kohnert, 1980):

a A growing demand for food from North- and East Nigeria, which made the Niger Province and especially the Nupeland a granary of Nigeria: „Rice production is increasing everywhere and particularly in Bida Division". „Niger Province . . . tends progressively to fill a role comparable to

that played by the Canadian wheat fields in relation to the densely populated and bread eating countries of Northern Europe." (Provincial Annual Reports, 1954: 102; 1953: 107).

b The improvement of transport facilities and roads in Bida Division during the 1960's, especially the improvement of the inter-regional road-network, Bida-Mokwa, Tegina-Bida, and the replacement of the ferry service across the Kaduna River by a bridge.

c Government promotion of agriculture by the creation of credit-and marketing co-operatives, the distribution of fertilizer and seed to highly subsidized prices, construction of irrigation schemes and the „Tractor Hiring Service", Group Farming, etc. (However, apart from fertilizer distribution, the effectiveness of these measures is open to question).

The survey shows (cf. tab. 2) that even within relatively small definable areas like Nupe-land rural-capitalism may develop very unevenly and at different times (if at all):

The proportion of rich peasants in the total of farm households surveyed is twice as high in the pioneer areas like the rice-producing *fadamas* of Jima (16 %) as in the upland of Lemu (8 %); and in Dabba, Trans-Kaduna, where nearly half of the able-bodied young men migrated to the urban centres around Lagos, Ibadan, Kaduna, this class has hardly come into existence. These disproportionalities, however, cannot be taken as a proof that the so-called integrating-forces within the peasantry will prevent any dissolution-process on a larger scale.

The income from hired labour has been understated by the poor peasants for the reasons given above. In addition, the proportion of hired labourers has been underestimated as well (tab. 2): Most of the farm labourers prefer to work far away from their mother-town and therefore were underrepresented in their own villages; Kuchi is an exceptionally good example for this case, since most of the young men of this hamlet were working as seasonal migrants in the rice farms further south of Bida during the time of investigation. Nevertheless it is obvious that there exists nothing like a proletarianisation of the peasantry: out of four farm labourers interviewed, just one owned no land or other means of production at all.

The family-household farm is still the most common economic unit in Nupe agriculture; but it would be dangerous to derive from this fact assumptions on the stability and superiority of the smallholding economy in general or on specific social and economic levelling tendencies inherent to the peasantry in particular. On the contrary, customary frequency-distributions concerning acreage and income of peasant-households can only reinforce the impression of rigid rural inequality, whereby these traditional indicators of social stratification apparently even tend to overemphasize the existing differences (for ; detailed critique of land/income per resident data without due regard to socio-economic stratification between and within the families, cf. Kohnert, 1980):

Tab. 3: Acreage-distribution, cultivated land of farm-households in four Nupe villages 1975/76 (in % of cases per size-class and cumulative relative frequency of households and acreage) (in %).

size-class (in acres)	rel. frequ. of households	cumul. rel. freq. of households	cumul. rel. freq. of acreage
0-2	12.4	12.4	2.4
2.1-4	17.6	30.0	9.2
4.1-7	22.9	52.9	23.3
7.1-10	21.0	73.8	43.7
11-15	11.9	85.7	60.2
15-20	7.1	92.9	74.2
21-30	3.3	96.2	82.9
31-40	1.9	98.1	89.6
41-	1.9	100	100

Gini-coefficient: 0.4390.

Source: Author's survey, 1976.

Tab. 4: Distribution of monetary gross-income of farm households in four Nupe villages 1975/76 (in %; agricultural- and non-agricultural income in money; income in kind excluded).

income-class (in N)	rel. frequ. of households	cum. rel. freq. of households	cumul. rel. freq. of income
0- 50	24.8	24.8	2.3
51- 100	16.2	41.0	7.4
101- 200	23.3	64.3	21.9
201- 400	20.0	84.3	45.5
401- 600	9.5	93.8	63.9
601- 800	2.9	96.7	72.6
801-1000	1.0	97.6	76.3
1001-2000	1.4	99.0	83.7
2001-	1.0	100	100

Monetary gross household income: Gini coefficient: 0.5811,

standardized coefficient of variation: 0.7555;

disposable household income: std. coef. of var.: 0.6008;

disposable income per resident: std. coef. of var.: 0.6130.

Source: Author's survey, 1976.

According to Tab. 3, peasant-households with farms larger than 20 acres, which constitute just 7 % of the sample, possess more than a quarter (25.8 %) of the total area cultivated in the four survey-villages; whereas more than half of all farm households are smaller than 7 acres and cultivate 23 % of the land only. Concerning the monetary gross income, rural inequality stands out even stronger, - last not least due to the varying proportion of non-agricultural income (especially salaries of L. A. employees). The majority of the peasants (64 %) has to be content with an income of less than N 200 (gross money income, income in kind excluded) p. a., whereas a small group of households (6.3 %), which earns more than N 600 annually, receives about one third of the total money-income of the sample (tab. 4).

f. 3 Data on the relevance of social mobility in the countryside

As populist hypotheses on countervailing forces within the peasantry, which tend to level all economic inequalities in the long run, are not backed by the available data, another thesis will be forwarded here, which recently has been deduced from a similar empirical background (cf. Harrison, 1975; for a more detailed critique of demographic or life-cycle differentiationtheses cf. Kohnert, 1980): It is supposed that there exists nothing like a cyclical mobility between groups of peasant households, but that the dissolution of rich families in the course of time tends to result in the „shedding of inefficient segments of the extended family" and in a cumulation of social and economic advantages in subsequent generations. Unfortunately, the survey of certain aspects of the family history of a number of peasant families, some results of which are given below, does not allow for a stringent demonstration of this thesis; the reliability of the memory of the respondents concerning historic events of the past six decades, which forms the base of the following information, will hardly meet the requirements of sound statistical conclusions;

Both, the employment of non-family labour and the use of means of production like tractors, irrigation-systems, fertilizer, insecticides, are on a remarkably high level in the case of capitalist farmers, today as well as at the time of the beginning of the Civil War (1967), compared with non-capitalist households (tab. 5). As far as the respondents were able to provide information on the labour employment by their grandfathers at the time of Etsu Bello⁹, indicators like the size of the *efaké* labour groups of the extended family,

⁹ Etsu Bello (1916-26) is famous among Nupe peasants because he was the first to introduce a motor-car in the country in 1918, cf. Nadel, 1942: 139/40; and pp. 241-52, 311-13 on labour organisation.

the disposition of communal labour (*egbe*), and the disposal of serf labour (*sofa*), were distinctively greater in the case of families which have been defined as rich (capitalist) peasant families (in 1976) than in all other classes.

Tab. 5: Data on social mobility in four Nupe villages: Disposition of factors of production per class at the beginning of the Civil War (1967) and at the reign of Etsu Bello (1916-26) (in %).

factors of prod.	class 1975/76	rich peasants	non-capitalist peasants	middle peasants	poor peasants/farm labourers
households, employing					
- farm-labourers in 1967		67	30 ^a	37 ^b	24 ^c
— <i>egbe</i> in 1967		13	0.5 ^b	1 ^b	0
- fertilizer in 1967		87	45 ^a	55 ^a	37 ^c
- tractors in 1967		67	22 ^a	29 ^a	16 ^c
- seed dressing in 1967		93	73 ^a	78 ^b	69 ^d
- irrigation systems in 1967		40	13 ^b	20 ^b	7 ^c
- farm-labourers in 1916/26		20	14	15	13
- <i>egbe</i> in 1916/26		73	32 ^a	42 ^a	23 ^c
- <i>sofa</i> in 1916/26		20	3 ^b	4	2
av. size of <i>efako</i>					
unit in 1916/26 (no. of workers)		4.4	2.7 ^b	3.5	2.1 ^c

a Deviation between capitalist farmers and non-capitalist farmers (or middle peasants) significant on 1 % level.

b Deviation between capitalist farmers and non-capitalist farmers (or middle peasants) significant on 10 % level.

c Deviation between middle peasants and poor peasants/farm-labourers significant on 5 % level.

d Deviation between middle peasants and poor peasants/farm-labourers significant on 10 % level;

t-test, separate variance estimate, SPSS-1977, one-tail prob.

Source: Author's survey, 1976.

Differences concerning the use of bonded labour may indicate a relatively stronger capital-position of the grandfathers of the rich peasants of today, compared with middle- or poor peasants. The use of hired farmlabour and *egbe*-groups at the reign of Etsu Bello, which is above the average, leads to the assumption that the rich peasant families had a high social status and/or considerable financial-resources already two generations ago; because in the past only village authorities were allowed to profit from this kind of communal labour. The larger *efako*-groups, as well as the command of a greater labour-reservoir in general, allow to suppose, that rich peasant families on the average have had greater chances to accumulate resources than other peasants.

More detailed information on the genealogies of some of the more important families of Dabba points to the same direction: The foundations of the wealth of four of the six most influential families of the village were laid already by their great-grandfathers; these ancestors were known as traders in horses, gowns or cola-nuts besides being farmers; - one of the great-grandfathers even reached the position of a councillor at the court of the Etsu Nupe. Today the family-heads of all these households concerned do not live any more in Dabba, but in Kaduna, Lagos or Ibadan, nevertheless they still have very strong ties to the village community, as the formation of the „Dabba Social Club" by these families may show.

It therefore appears that a high socio-economic position of a peasant-family in the past does influence positively the outlook of at least some of the inheriting descendants; apart

from other factors the present class differentiation may be considered as a function of these divergent prospects (on similar restrictions of social mobility in the Kano-Close-Settled-Zone, cf. Hill, 1977: 141, 152, 156, 158).

4.4 *On the development of class consciousness during the dissolution process of the peasantry*

Although marked social and economic differences between rich-, middle-, and poor farmers emerged, this inequality has not yet become as manifest that it would be articulated as class consciousness by the individuals concerned; - at least not *vis a vis* strangers with relatively high status, who might be suspected to be affiliated with the ruling class. This lack of class consciousness, however, cannot be said to represent just the direct result of a specific peasant culture, as it is in no way peculiar to the peasantry or the countryside (cf. Lubeck's vivid account of the development of class consciousness among Hausa/Fulani industrial workers in Kano, Lubeck, 1979: 308/9). Besides the early stage of rural capitalist development three factors may blur the view of Nupe peasants concerning their actual class position:

a There exists a well known status hierarchy among the Nupe, which is determined to a high degree by wealth and income, - especially in the view of the younger generation of the villages, which often refers to important persons not by their names but by the registration-number of their cars. However, a system of social ranks, founded on age-grades, religion, occupation, and education overlaps the economic grading: a poor peasant, for example, looks down upon the well-to-do Yoruba immigrant in his neighbourhood, although the latter may even spare the money for a pilgrimage to Mecca and thus will obtain the desired title „Alhaji“.

b Concern about social mobility rather than sentiments of group solidarity defines the nature of class-consciousness (cf. Nadel, 1942: 134), - nowadays even among Nupe peasants. Indoctrinated by the educational system, radio, and religion many young farmers hope that hard work and protection will secure them a white collar job in the cities. Thus they adhere to an ideology which shows fictitious ways out of their underprivileged position and causes the confusion of an imaginary future with the existing inequalities, which are more likely to determine their future path through life.

c The rural-urban confrontation, which causes citizens of Bida or other towns to ridicule the villagers as „bush people“, results in mutual distrust not only between town-people and villagers, but even between the peasants of relatively advanced villages and more backward hamlets, and tends to reinforce integrative mechanisms within the villages.

Whether the class consciousness especially of the poor- and middle peasants will be consolidated in the next decades to that extent that the peasants will be able to articulate their interests by their own, appears to be open to question¹⁰. It depends mainly on the future development of the dissolution-process of the peasantry, which is a function of so many unknown variables that it is hardly to predict. The principal danger for the poor- and middle peasants in Nupeland may be the present land-tenure system, which seems to allow the landlord class to extend their claims of ownership (both in quantitative and qualitative terms) in a „legal“ way to more and more parcels of land, if only it proves to be profitable. Some of the irrigation projects, initiated and subsidised by the state and/or the Native Authority, like the Edozighi irrigation scheme, developed in the early 1960's, might herald two possible directions of future development: most of the farmplots of the scheme were not given to the resident peasants but to members of the ruling class in Bida; these paid the water-rate and either employed peasants on a share-crop base (50 % of the yields to the owner, cf. Angulu, 1965: 31), or invested directly in the project, by employing hired labour and more sophisticated methods of agricultural production, and made „excellent profits“ of more than 100 %, as one of the landlords told me proudly. Development trends similar to the lucrative capitalist offensive in the Awash valley, in north-eastern Ethiopia, supervised in the 1960's by the Awash Valley Authority and foreign owned agro-industries in co-operation with the Emir (cf. Bondestam, 1973), - or the

10 Cf. e. g. Baldus, 1977, on the semi-permanent discrepancy between objective class in-

terest and subjective self-consciousness in the case of the Machube, Northern Benin.

transition of the traditional land-tenure system in favour of capitalist farmers like in Northern Ghana (cf. Sheperd, 1978), cannot be excluded either; the large-scale development and irrigation project, evaluated at present in Cis-Kaduna by the World Bank/FAO, or joint-ventures, like the sugar-cane plantation under construction in Sunt: (Trans-Kaduna), will show very soon, whether the mass of the lower-class peasants will be able to participate in the gains of the economic progress promised to the farmers in the present electoral campaigns of the new political parties. But it would be dangerous to suppose that the increasing subordination of the peasants under the laws of commodity production would *automatically* lead to progressive class-differentiation; strong counteracting forces may develop like a considerable overall increase in the labour productivity in agriculture which might match the relative decline of the income of poor and middle peasants; the decisive factor which determines the outlook of the peasantry, however, is considered to be the future attitude of the landlords, and that again, depends mainly on the question what kind of appropriation of the surplus-product will yield the highest profit for this class, - the extraction of rent in various forms or the employment of hired labour (cf. Schoer, 1977a).

Zusammenfassung

Die Kenntnis der sozialen Schichtung innerhalb der Bauernschaft ist eine entscheidende Vorbedingung für breit angelegte wirtschaftspolitische Maßnahmen zur effektiver Förderung der Agrarproduktion in Ländern der Dritten Welt. Nicht zuletzt auf Grund dieser Einsicht wenden sich auch in Nigeria seit kurzem einige Sozialwissenschaftler dem Problem der bauerlichen Sozialstruktur zu. Dabei kam man bisher stets zu dem Ergebnis, daß zwar tiefgreifende soziale und wirtschaftliche Ungleichheit zwischen den Bauern besteht, - man jedoch nicht von einer Klassendifferenzierung sprechen kann. Diese Schlußfolgerung spiegelt möglicherweise weniger die tatsächliche Lage der Bauern als vielmehr eine Fehlinterpretation des Klassen-Konzeptes wider.

Ein kritischer Überblick über einige schwerwiegende Mißinterpretationen des historisch-materialistischen Klassen-Konzeptes legt den Grundstein für einen neuen Ansatz zur Analyse des ländlichen Raumes in Nigeria. Angewandt auf eine sozio-ökonomische Erhebung in vier Dörfern des Nupelandes, Nord-Nigeria, im Jahre 1976, zeigt dieses Modell die Frühstadien einer rural-kapitalistischen Entwicklung, insbesondere unter den Reis produzierenden Marschbauern Cis-Kadunas auf; - eine Entwicklung, die sich ungeachtet der Hindernisse des gegenwärtigen semi-feudalen Landeigentumsystems vollzieht.

Weit verbreitete Annahmen über die Bedeutung sozialer Mobilität als Mittel des sozialen Ausgleichs werden durch die vorhandenen Daten nicht gestützt.

Resume

Ea connaissance des couches sociales à l'intérieur de la paysannerie est une condition préalable décisive lorsqu'il s'agit d'appliquer à grande échelle des mesures de politique économique encourageant efficacement la production agricole des pays du tiers monde. C'est pour cette raison entre autres que quelques sociologues se penchent depuis peu sur le problème de la structure sociale paysanne également au Nigeria. Jusqu'ici on en venait toujours à la conclusion qu'il existe bien de profondes inégalités sociales et économiques entre les paysans, - mais qu'on ne peut cependant parler d'une différenciation de classes. Cette conclusion reflète probablement moins la situation effective des paysans que bien plutôt une interprétation erronée du concept de classes.

Un survol critique de quelques fausses interprétations graves du concept de classes historico-matérialiste pose les fondements pour un nouveau début d'analyse de l'espace rural au Nigeria. Appliquée à une enquête socio-économique dans quatre villages du pays Nupe dans le Nigeria du Nord en 1976, ce modèle montre les premiers stades d'un développement capitaliste rural, en particulier chez les paysans du Cis-Kaduna producteurs de riz; - un développement qui s'accomplit en dépit des obstacles du système semi-féodal actuel de la propriété foncière.

Les hypothèses largement répandues concernant l'importance de la mobilité sociale en tant que moyen de compensation sociale ne sont pas appuyées par les données disponibles.

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